



October 1, 2018

Representative Hank Vaupel, Chair  
House Health Policy Committee  
P.O. Box 30014  
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Representative Vaupel:

On behalf of the Michigan Dental Hygienists' Association, please accept this letter as an indication of our support for Senate Bill 541. We appreciate your leadership in giving this legislation a hearing before the Committee.

SB 541 creates a new dental provider known as a Dental Therapist (DT) who would be able to perform the most commonly needed preventative and restorative dental care tasks in areas experiencing a dental shortage.

The Dental Therapist would work under the supervision of a Dentist and the addition of a DT to a dental care team would be voluntary and directed by the Dentist. Dental Therapists are similar to physician assistants on medical teams, and are well trained to perform routine dental procedures currently only performed by dentists, such as filling cavities.

Senate Bill 541 would give dentists the flexibility to modernize and expand their practices in a financially sustainable way, while also treating more patients who otherwise would not have access to dental care.

Access to dental care is limited or nonexistent for millions of Michigan residents, creating serious oral health care issues that can lead to tooth loss, pain and potential life-long ramifications.

- There is at least one dental shortage area in 77 of Michigan's 83 counties.
- More than one-third of all Michigan seniors have lost six or more natural teeth due to tooth decay or gum disease. Low-income seniors are more than three times as likely to have lost six or more teeth due to tooth decay and/or gum disease.
- Almost 3 out of 4 new mothers in 2008 did not receive dental care during their most recent pregnancy. Research shows gum disease contributes to preterm birth.
- Nearly 60 percent of children on Medicaid did not see a dentist in 2014—placing Michigan in the bottom ten states in the nation.
- 66 percent of third-graders in the Upper Peninsula have a history of dental decay in their primary and/or permanent teeth, compared to 56 percent statewide.

We urge your support of SB 541.

Regards,

Janet Miller RDH, BS - President  
Michigan Dental Hygienists' Association

CC: Members of the House Health Policy Committee